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Folk song, "Jesse James"

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JESSE JAMES

[Version 1]

Steadily, in strict narrative style (♩=92)



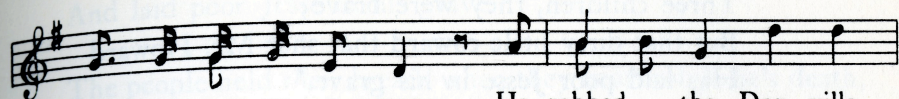
The musical notation is on a single staff with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a time signature of 4/4. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics are written below the staff, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes.

Jes - se James was a lad that
It was Rob - ert Ford that

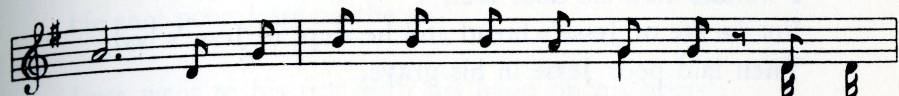
* Jackson has not been seen, hide nor hair, since that day.

† "I can call to memory Jim Murphy. He was near my age, for we was once schoolboys together. This Jim Murphy gave Sam and his outfit away, and I was told by a man present in the neighborhood where Jim Murphy died that Jim contracted sore eyes because some of Sam's friends slipped deadly poison in Jim's eye medicine and caused him to die a raving maniac."—J. M. Thorne, Fort Worth, Texas.

Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads



killed a - ma - ny a man; He robbed the Dan - ville
dir - ty lit - - - tle coward, I won - der how he does

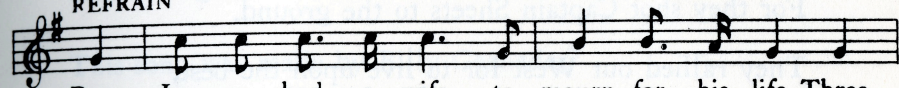


train. But that dir - ty lit - tle cow - ard that
feel, For he ate of Jes - se's bread and he

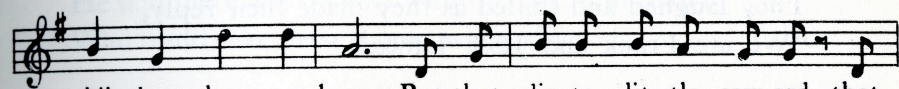


shot Mis - ter How - ard Has laid poor Jes - se in his grave.
slept in Jes - se's bed, Then laid poor Jes - se in his grave.

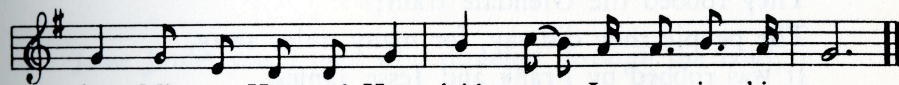
REFRAIN



Poor Jes - se had a wife to mourn for his life, Three



chil - dren they were brave; But that dir - ty lit - tle cow - ard that



shot Mis - ter How - ard Has laid poor Jes - se in his grave.

Jesse James was a lad that killed a-many a man;
He robbed the Danville train.
But that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard
Has laid poor Jesse in his grave.

Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads

Pore Jesse James! Pore Jesse James!
Laid Jesse James in 'is grave;
En a dirty little coward by the name of Robert Howard
Laid Jesse James in 'is grave.

Oh, the people of the West, when they heard of Jesse's death,
Wondered how the hero come ter die;
But a dirty little coward by the name of Robert Howard
Laid Jesse James in his grave.

It wuz late one Saddy night when the moon wuz shinin' bright
That Jesse robbed the Danville train;
But thet Smith an' Wesson ball knocked por Jesse frum the wall
En laid Jesse James in 'is grave.

[Version 3*]

Oh! Jesse was the man, he traveled through the land,
For money Jesse never suffered pain;
Jesse and his brother Frank, they robbed the Chicago bank
And stopped the Danville train.

Jesse said to his brother Frank, "Will you stand by my side
Till the Danville train passes by?"
"Yes, I'll stand by your side and fight one hundred men till I die
And the Danville train has rolled by."

Oh, Robert Ford was the man, he traveled through the land,
He never robbed a train in his life;
But he told the courts his aim was to kill Jesse James,
And to live in peace with his wife.

* From eastern Kentucky mountain whites, MS. of C. B. House, as given by C. T. Perrow, "Songs and Rhymes of the South," *Journal of American Folk Lore*, Vol. XXV, p. 137.

Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads

Ten thousand dollars reward was given Robert Ford
For killing Jesse James on the sly;
Poor Jesse has gone to rest with his hands upon his breast,
And I'll remember Jesse James till I die.

[Version 4*]

Jesse James was a boy that downed many a man,
He held up the Danville train,
He robbed from the rich and he gave to the poor,
He'd a hand and a heart and a brain.

Chorus:

Poor Jesse left a wife to mourn all her life,
His children three were brave,
But the dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard,
He laid poor Jesse in his grave.

Jesse's brother Frank cleaned out Gallatin Bank
And he took all the cash from the place,
And they shot Captain Sheets in the public streets,
For it was a lively race.

Jess went to the depot the agent for to see,
And there they surrendered the keys
To Jesse James and Frank who had cleaned out the bank,
And the agent was on his knees.

And that same midnight when the moon was shining bright,
They stopped the Glenville train,
They were bold hearts there and they did it without fear,
It was planned by Jesse's brain.

* As sung by Jim Welsh; reported in *Frontier Ballads*, by Charles J. Finger (New York. Doubleday, Page, 1927).

Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads

Then the sad, sad thing what we have to sing,
When Jesse with his family in his shack
Was reading the Book then Robert Ford took
A shot at poor Jesse James.